

RDA Toolkit

Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA. *RDA Toolkit*. Co-published by ALA, CLA, and CILIP, 2010. (<http://access.rdatoolkit.org>) \$195 for a solo-user annual subscription, \$325 for one user at a time with unlimited user profiles, plus additional fees for adding concurrent users.

RDA: Resource Description and Access is the new cataloging standard, based on the conceptual models of FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data), that is intended to replace AACR2. This new standard has been in development since 2004 and has undergone numerous changes since its inception, with future changes very probable once the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee compiles the results of its testing period. RDA, which was initially intended to be available only online to accommodate its fluid nature, is the core document in the *RDA Toolkit*, a web-based collection of resources for catalogers implementing these new rules.

Though RDA is supposed to be “easier to use, more adaptable, and more cost efficient in its application” than AACR2 (Introduction 0.2), it has not been universally well received by catalogers; however, there is no doubt that the *RDA Toolkit* is a very well-designed product. The resources are organized under three main tabs in a navigation bar on the left-hand side of the page: RDA, Tools, and Resources. The RDA tab contains the full text of RDA, while the Tools tab contains the RDA Element Set View, RDA Mappings, Workflows, Mappings, and Schemas. Under the Resources tab can be found the full text of AACR2, Library of Congress Policy Statements, and links to other useful external websites such as Cataloger’s Desktop and the MARC Standards page maintained by the Library of Congress.

RDA is an intimidating document, especially for those who lack familiarity with FRBR and FRAD, but the creators of the *RDA Toolkit* have tried to make it as navigable as possible, and have built in a number of features to make the transition to RDA as smooth as possible for users who are familiar with AACR2. In addition to being able to browse the table of contents, users have quick search and advanced search options that are available at the top of the page. The advanced search includes an option allowing the user to search by AACR2 rule number. Also, the full text of AACR2, available under the Resources tab, includes links to the corresponding sections of RDA. This has the potential to be extremely useful to catalogers as they develop fluency in the vocabulary of RDA. The RDA Element Set View, which outlines the FRBR and FRAD entities and the relations among them, located under the Tools tab, will also be valuable to this end.

In addition to the RDA Mappings, which provides outlines of how RDA works with MARC and with MODS, the mapping tool allows users to create and share their own mappings, and to view outside users’ shared mappings of RDA to other metadata standards. This emphasis on collaboration can also be seen in the Workflows tool, which allows for the sharing of user-created content as well. In addition, users are able to share their bookmarks and saved searches within their institution.

Though for the most part the *Toolkit* is easy to navigate, there are two quirks that may cause first-time users initial confusion. First, the table of contents does not automatically synchronize to one’s location within a document.

That is, if users are browsing within the full-text of RDA and click on a link taking them to another section, the table of contents in the navigation bar does not change; instead, it is necessary to click on the “Synch TOC” button at the top of the page. Secondly, each of the three tabs (RDA, Tools, and Resources) functions as its own window. If users are in the RDA tab and click on a link that leads to a resource in the Tools tab, hitting the back button on the browser will not return them to their location in the RDA tab, but rather to the previous location in the Tools tab. This design element allows users to keep relevant documents open in all three tabs.

Overall, the design and functionality of the *Toolkit* are excellent. The decision whether or not to subscribe, however, necessarily depends on an institution’s decision to implement RDA. Smaller libraries and libraries with limited budgets have very little incentive to become early adopters of RDA, so it seems prudent to wait at least until the report of the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee is released and possible amendments made. (Information on the test can be found at <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/rda/>). Also, even though new MARC fields have been added to accommodate certain RDA attributes (see <http://www.loc.gov/marc/RDAinMARC29.html>), not every ILS recognizes these fields yet. For smaller libraries, then, it does not make much sense to transition to RDA at this early stage, and this makes it unnecessary to subscribe to the *RDA Toolkit*. Librarians who wish to learn about RDA without committing to implementing it would be better served by Chris Oliver’s book *Introducing RDA: A Guide to the Basics* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2010).

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Title: RDA Toolkit



Source: Theological Libr 4 no1 J1 2011 p. 105-106

ISSN: 1937-8904

Publisher: American Theological Library Association
300 South Wacker Drive, Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606-6701

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